



Exploring Grammar through Small Group Interaction Technique on Pre-Intermediate Structure Course

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the students' ability on structure course at the third semester of STIT Muhammadiyah, Tanjung Redeb. Teaching and learning process in mastering the grammatical of English was conducted through Small Group Interaction technique. So, the teacher and students collaborate in exploring various grammatical of English materials. By using small group interaction, it has shown the students' performance in learning grammar achievement.

Keywords: grammar, Small Group Interaction

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INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the structure and meaning system of language. Every language has own grammar. People who speak the same language are able to communicate because they intuitively know the grammar system of that language and the rule of making a meaningful sentence. English as an international language is important to be learned with the result that English is being part of the compulsory subject in the school, in which it is learned from the pre-school till university level.

Learning English as a Foreign Language for Indonesian student may different from learning the Indonesian language, it could be rather difficult because English is not a mother

language. Especially learning grammar is to learn about the order and the rules in the language itself sometimes faces the difficulty in teaching and learning process, such as teachers teach with a monotone method, the use of inappropriate methods, and media utilization is less appropriate.

Whereas the role of the English language as the tool of international communication is very important for various sectors. This is a requirement for students who are prepared to be able to compete for jobs and business. Because the current development and the increasing number of foreign companies in Indonesia, inevitably force prospective job seekers to be able to master English. Because most companies are looking for

employees who are able to follow the rhythm and communication with non-Indonesian clients, both orally and written communications. Therefore studying grammar in English is very important, because mastering grammar well means being able to convey and understand the purpose and purpose of the message delivered orally or in writing.

Definition of Grammar

The educational context especially in learning and teaching of a foreign language, grammar usually considered one of the language components beside vocabulary and sound system which students should acquire. The word grammar has several meanings, the experts defined it vary, grammar is defined by Celce-Murcia (1991), "Grammar is a way that accounts the structure of the target language and its communicative use" (p.2). According to Williams (1995) "Grammar is the formal study of the structure of a language and describes how words fit together in meaningful constructions" (p.2).

In another way, Harmer (2001) also defines that "grammar is the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language". Leech (1968) also define that "grammar is a mechanism for putting words together. It is a central part of language which relates sound and meaning. The meaning has to be converted into words and put together to grammatical rules" (p. 4). Although the descriptions of grammar mentioned above are different, the goal is basically equal that "grammar is a description of

how elements of a language are systematically combined". The statements indicate that the students were taught about the rule of the target language in the school. They learn about it because of the teacher aware that as foreign language learners students should know about the language rules that native speaker use as a communication tool. Students commonly do not realize that when they express themselves through writing or speaking, what they write or speak have its patterns and they keep subconsciously applying the patterns in their communication.

Understand why grammar is useful and important. Without knowing grammar, someone cannot be said to have learned because grammar tells us how to use language. Celce-Murcia suggests that (1991) "Grammar is important to be taught because it affects students' performance in all four skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p.2). Thornbury (2002) also defines that "Students are expected in comprehending written or spoken English, they must know the system rule of the grammar of a target language since grammar is a tool for making meaning" (p.4).

Many linguists and researchers have given support to grammar instruction in ESL and EFL language teaching and learning. For example, the communicative competence model of Canale & Swain (1980) clearly illustrates the significance of grammar. In this model, grammar is viewed as one component of communicative competence. Without grammar, learners can communicate effectively only in a

limited number of situations. In addition, Hawkins (1994) grammar is highly valuable as an important part of the study of language, of ideas, and writing. Besides, he points out that grammar reflects the power and order of the human mind and it also helps us to understand the diversity of human culture.

Garner believes that grammar gives us the means to analyze and describe our language. Furthermore, many EFL learners in Thailand who want to further their studies abroad still have to take an intensive course in grammar in order to pass such exams as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Research in second language acquisition, as noted by Celce-Murcia (1991), indicates that post-pubescent adolescent adults need to pay attention to the form of the target language. If they do not, they ultimately develop an incomplete and imperfect inter-language that reflects learning problems.

Given the preceding perspectives and as communication is a goal of second and foreign language instruction, it is obvious that grammar is now part of language teaching. In this new role, according to Celce-Murcia (1991), grammar instruction should be content-based, meaningful, contextualized and discourse based rather than sentenced-based. If we study a language, we also have to study grammar. Grammar one the language components; it has an important role in communication. It is taught to the students to support four skill, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Wilkins strengthens this

statement that we know that there exist a limited number of structure in each language, and some admittedly, more simple more basic, more important than others, that the learning of a language is the learning of these structures one by one.

From those, we know that grammar is very essential knowledge in learning the language. It is important to understand the meaning of the individual words in a sentence. It is not enough to understand the sentence itself; we need the grammatical device, such as the arrangement of words in phrase, clause, and sentence.

Small Group Interaction

According to Hornby (2000) Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, group is a number of people or things that are together in the same place or that are connected in some way. Most experts agree that Group is a number of people when it consists of more two people interacting with each other (Tubbs, 2007). Based on the statement above it can be said that a group is a number of people when it consists of more two people interacting with each other, with or without an assigned leader in such a way that each person influences, and is influenced by another person in the group.

Small group itself, according to William (1995), *Infant and Child Care: a guide to education in group settings*. Baker is three or more people interacting face to face, with or without an assigned leader in such a way that each person influences, and is influenced by another person in the group. Based on the statement above it can be said that small

group interaction is the process by which three or more members of a group exchange verbal and nonverbal messages in an attempt to influence one another (Tubbs, 2007).

The application of small group in the classroom has many steps: First is start with one small group that works well together. Let them arrange their desks in a small circle and proceed to plan and make choices about their project. It would be a good idea for them to elect a chairman and to carry out their ideas. In this way, they will have a full range of group work experience and will have encountered several of the problems in working together that will come up again and again. Second is a separate individual from their group to each small group and provide them as leaders for other groups. The separate individuals from that group can serve effectively as helping persons in new groups who have no experience. Third, set some well-defined, accomplishable tasks that provide early reinforcement. If the group is getting the job done, the students will be more satisfied with the group and with their participation in it.

Fourth, work with each group specifically in turn. This should be done so that the students are aware of your attention and feel comfortable in knowing that your time is theirs. Sit down with them and systematically explore the "state of the project" with each group member. This activity can increase a student's motivation in learning. Fifth, provide resource materials of several kinds. The teacher also can give the media; such as picture, storyboard, etc to increase student's intake of information sessions to be more

understandable to all group members. Material for making media aids for the group report should also be provided. Sixth, if the students getting their job done, the teacher asks the student in each group to report and discuss the result of student's small group interaction and develop suggestions for a brief, lively information sharing session (Lapp, 1975).

The use of small group is posited to have number advantages over individual practice: a) It provides the motivational framework of the group and the economy of teaching more than one child at a time. b) The size of small group permits: ease of control, flexible method regulation, personalized attention, and individualized programming. c) The use of small group also provides a social framework with each child can identify and use as a guide to determine his or her action, can use as sharing experience that makes enjoyment in playing and learning together. d) The main benefit of small group work seems to lie in the cooperative aspects it can help foster. This method can make to the development of pupils' social skills (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005).

The use of small group can increase student's motivation because the size of the small group makes the English teacher easy to control the members each group, small group also provides a social framework because the students can interact each other and share their experience to solve their problems.

Tubbs (2007) states the advantages of the small group are: Developing self-awareness. b) Managing personal stress. c) Solving problem

analytically and creatively. d) Coaching, counseling, and establishing supportive communication. e) Gaining power and influence. f) Motivating others. g) Empowering and delegating. h) Managing conflict. i) Building effective teams and team works. Refers to statements above the writer says that the use of small group has many advantages in the teaching learning process because it can motivate and develop student's skills, especially in speaking. Small group also can develop student learning outcome.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is descriptive analytical. The analytical descriptive method according to Sugiono (2009) is: "Descriptive Method is a method that has functions to describe or give an overview of the object under the research through data or samples that have been collected at all without doing analysis and making conclusions that apply to the public" (p.29). The other word analytical descriptive study takes the problem or focuses on the problems when the research was carried out, the results of the research are then processed and analyzed then make conclusions. It is said descriptive research because it aims to obtain objective explanations for analyzing grammar skills in understanding pre-intermediate structure course in Muhammadiyah Islamic Education Institute, in Tanjung Redeb, Berau.

The researcher conducted this research was in STITM Tanjung Redeb, Berau, especially third-semester students, the number of which is 23

students. The subject in this research was all members in third semester of English Education Department whereas the object was the students' grammatical ability specifically in pre-intermediate structure course. Research instrument in this study, the researcher applied the test for collecting the ordinary data. In this project, paper test played an important role as mine instrument, because it would give the answers mentioned in the research problem.

The procedure of data analysis is an activity to analyze and calculate the collected data. The data collected by the means of the test instrument have been analyzed differently based on specific purposes. Here several steps were done to administer the data by using statistical tools scoring, finding mean, median and mode. Besides, the following table is the rating scale from Antonio to present the existing students' mean performance.

Table 1. Rating Scale

Scale	Verbal Interpretation
80-100	Excellent
60-79	Very Good
40-59	Good
20-39	Fair
0-19	Poor

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The succeeding data on the table is the students' score on posttest after having several treatments. Those scores were basis to find what students' ability in pre-intermediate structure course on the third semester of English Education Department at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Muhammadiyah, Tanjung Redeb.

Table 2. Score of the students

N	Post-test	N	Post-test
1	81	10	66
2	82	11	81

3	65	12	69
4	82	13	85
5	70	14	74
6	70	15	73
7	70	16	76
8	77	17	69
9	75	18	74
		Σ	1339

Table 3. The Mean, Median, Mode

Observation	Mean	Median	Mode
Posttest	74.4	74.5	70

As shown on the table above, summation of students' score was 1339 posttest finding on the mean score was 74.4, the value of the median is 74.5, and the value of mode is 70. The performance on posttest shows that the rating scale of students' grammar ability through small group interaction technique on pre-intermediate structure course is very good, the students obtained good ability.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this work was to find out what the students' grammar ability through small group interaction technique on pre-intermediate structure course in the third semester of English Education Department at STIT Tanjung Redeb is. The success of this work was support by teaching technique beside the students' consciousness that language is an important aspect of human life. It is a means of communication the persons to the others. The people need language to looking for and give people benefit information. Communication holds the most important aspect of the language, listening or reading cannot occur without communication. People need a language as communication to express their

feeling, thought and desires. Overall, the grammar understanding plays an important role, because expressing an idea through speaking or writing correctly and accuracy could be more meaningful.

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